



## Comparison of Manasseh and Josiah

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

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2 Kings 21:1 through 23:30

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

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“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.” (2 Kings 23:25)

### BACKGROUND

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This portion of text covers three kings of Judah over a span of eighty-eight years.

The first eighteen verses of chapter 21 are the account of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, who was born after Hezekiah’s life had been extended by God for fifteen years. Hezekiah had been responsible for a spiritual revival that swept the entire nation during his reign, and had done away with the idolatry that his father, Ahaz, had established.

Manasseh came to the throne when he was twelve years old, and reigned for a total of fifty-five years. After the death of Hezekiah, he reversed the religious reforms instituted by his godly father, and reinstated pagan worship. One of Judah’s most evil kings, he practiced sorcery and witchcraft, and even sacrificed his own son in idol worship. He took idols into the Jerusalem Temple, rebuilt the high places that his father had destroyed, and erected altars for Baal. He made an image of Asherah (a female goddess of sex and fertility), and worshiped the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 33:11-19 indicates that late in Manasseh’s reign, Assyria overthrew Jerusalem and captured the king. He was imprisoned in Babylon, and there, humiliated and powerless, he “humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers” (2 Chronicles 33:12). God heard his repentant prayer and extended mercy. Manasseh was not only freed from his confinement, but was returned to his throne in Jerusalem. Back in power, Manasseh destroyed the idol shrines he had built, did away with his desecrations of the Temple, and restored the Temple worship. However, a decisive turn into idolatry had already been made by the nation. Manasseh’s conversion seemed to have no lasting impact, for when Judah ultimately fell, God attributed it to the sins of Manasseh.

Verses 19 through 26 of chapter 21 concern the reign of Manasseh’s son Amon, who became king at

the age of twenty-two. Sadly, Amon apparently was not influenced by his father’s repentance, for it is recorded that he “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did” (2 Kings 21:20). He served idols and forsook God. After just two years of rule, his servants conspired against him and he was assassinated in his own home.

Chapter 22 begins the account of Josiah. This ruler, commended in Scripture as a godly leader who “turned to the LORD with all his heart” (2 Kings 23:25), ascended to the throne at eight years of age, when his father, Amon, was assassinated. In contrast to his father, Josiah had an interest in the true God. The account of his life in 2 Chronicles records that he began seeking God in the eighth year of his reign, and four years later undertook reforms to stop idol worship in the nation (see 2 Chronicles 34:3-7).

At the age of twenty-five, Josiah instituted the rebuilding of the Temple, which had deteriorated and been left in a state of disrepair during the periods of idol worship in the land. While the workers were making these repairs, they found the Book of the Law. When Josiah heard the book read, he recognized with horror that his people had neglected the commandments of God, and thus stood in danger of judgment. Rending his clothes as a sign of grief and repentance, Josiah immediately set out on a campaign to obey the Lord’s instructions and to lead the people of Judah in a return to the God of their fathers.

Josiah died in battle after a reign of thirty-one years in Jerusalem. In spite of his efforts toward reform, Judah reverted again to idolatry after his death.

### QUESTIONS

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1. King Manasseh was raised by a godly father, Hezekiah. However, he rejected his spiritual heritage and did “that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.” What specific sins are attributed to Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:3-7?

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2. What spiritual concept is illustrated by the fact that Hezekiah, one of the godliest kings in the history of Judah, had a son who was one of the most wicked?

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**3.** In 2 Kings 21:10-15, we find a prophetic utterance announcing the coming desolation of Jerusalem and Judah because of Manasseh's sin. What word pictures are used in verse 13 to describe the judgment that would come upon Judah?

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**4.** Amon succeeded his father Manasseh as ruler in Judah. What descriptive phrases indicate the kind of man Amon was? 2 Kings 21:20-22

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**5.** Josiah's father, King Amon, was very wicked, as was his grandfather, King Manasseh. In spite of being raised in an ungodly home, what did Josiah choose to do? 2 Kings 22:2

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**6.** During his eighteenth year as king, Josiah instructed that the Temple in Jerusalem be repaired, after many years of neglect. While those repairs were being carried out, the Book of the Law was found in the Temple. How did Josiah respond when the Word of God was read to him? What was the significance of his reaction? 2 Kings 22:11

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**7.** Josiah sent emissaries to Huldah, a prophetess of Jerusalem, to "inquire of the LORD" concerning the fate of himself, his people, and his nation in light of the transgressions of their fathers. Briefly summarize in your own words the answer the prophetess gave. 2 Kings 22:15-20

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**8.** What did Josiah do after hearing the response of the prophetess? 2 Kings 23:1-8

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**9.** Josiah took steps to remove all idols from the nation. What idols could be in a person's life in our day?

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## **CONCLUSION**

It is important to learn from the Biblical examples given to us. The lives of these three kings illustrate that God will have mercy upon the wicked when there is sincere repentance, that He will ultimately judge the wicked, and that He always responds to repentant and humble hearts. We learn that our actions impact others, and that this impact can last for generations. Finally, we recognize that even sweeping national reforms are of no lasting value unless there is genuine repentance and ongoing obedience to God.

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## **NOTES**